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United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

JUN 12 1989

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Free Baptist Church
other names/site number Penley Corner Church

2. Location

street & number Riverside Drive
city, town Auburn
state Maine code ME county Androscoggin code 001 zip code 04210

3. Classification

Table with 3 columns: Ownership of Property, Category of Property, and Number of Resources within Property. Includes checkboxes for private/public ownership and building/district/site/structure/object categories.

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of certifying official: [Signature] SHPO
Date: 6/7/89
State or Federal agency and bureau: Maine Historic Preservation Commission

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official
Date
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
[] entered in the National Register.
[] See continuation sheet.
[] determined eligible for the National Register. [] See continuation sheet.
[] determined not eligible for the National Register.
[] removed from the National Register.
[] other, (explain:)
Signature of the Keeper
Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religion/Religious Structure

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religion/Religious Structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)Greek Revival

Gothic Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone/Granite

walls Wood/Weatherboard

roof Asphalt

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Free Baptist Church is a modest gable roofed frame edifice clad in weatherboards. Its exterior is distinguished by a narrow colonnade on the facade and equilateral arched windows on the nave walls. Inside, the church exhibits an intact late nineteenth century decorative treatment. A granite block foundation supports the building.

Facing east, the front elevation has a three-part configuration that is comprised of the engaged porch at ground level, the projecting interior balcony at mid level that is punctuated by a pair of widely spaced two-over-two windows and a pediment featuring a narrow cornice and an equilaterally arched and louvered vent. Four equally spaced posts support the balcony, and centrally located behind is a two-leaf paneled and glazed door framed by the original Greek Revival surround.

Both nave side walls feature three symmetrically placed arched openings. The existing windows include a Queen Anne style upper sash that has red colored glass bordered by small panes and a two-pane lower sash. The arches are fitted with louvers. No documentary photographs have as yet been found that show what the original pattern was although they were probably six-over-six. In addition to the windows on the north side, a brick flue stack rises through the metal roof near the east corner. A single small six-over-six occupies the gable peak on the rear elevation.

In stark contrast to the exterior, the interior of the church is highly ornamented. This remodeling program was probably undertaken during the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century and the detailing survives to a remarkable degree. Upon entering the church one stands below the balcony and a ceiling of narrow tongue-and-groove sheathing. Entrance to the balcony is gained through an enclosed stair at the southeast corner. A wide center aisle separates the two principal groups of pews whereas narrower aisles extend along the walls. Narrow sheathed wainscot covers these walls up to the sills of the windows. A wide raised platform spans two-thirds of the endwall and a smaller set of pews occupy the remaining part. A balustrade and a stenciled backdrop with the inscription "Welcome" frame the pulpit. The ceiling, which has been lowered from the original height, is comprised of narrow wood sheathing and boxed beams. A foliate stenciled pattern forms a border on the ceiling whereas the beams feature

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Art

Period of Significance

c. 1875-1900

Significant Dates

c. 1875-1900

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Believed to have been constructed in 1833, the Free Baptist Church is a modest wooden frame building that combines Greek and Gothic Revival stylistic features. It is distinguished, however, by the extensive and remarkably well preserved decorative interior finishes that appear to have been added during the third quarter of the nineteenth century. For this reason the church is eligible for nomination to the Register under criterion C.

The history of the Free Baptist congregation in the neighborhood now known as Penley's Corner or South Auburn, can be traced to the beginnings of Baptist preaching in this area. In 1808 the Rev. Daniel Hutchinson held the first services in the western part of Danville (a township which became the southern part of Auburn City in 1867). This congregation grew slowly in numbers until the period 1826-1834 when some 140 persons were added to its rolls. Apparently, a sizeable number of the members were settled in the vicinity of the existing church building because on March 5, 1833, thirty of them were dismissed from the parent congregation "...for the purposes of being organized into a new church..." It is assumed that they built their house of worship during the ensuing months on land provided by John Penley (1782-1833) whose former farm surrounds the lot.

Documentary records did not survive a 1940s fire in the Church secretary's home making it impossible to know the exact subsequent history of the congregation. The 1873 Atlas and History of Androscoggin County, Maine indicates the church's location and carries a brief sketch of the congregation's formation. A comparison of subsequent issues of the Maine State Year Book and Legislative Manual, however, shows that between the year 1880 and 1881 the congregation must have ceased holding regular meetings because there is no additional listing of a clergyman representing this congregation. It may be that services were only held on an infrequent basis thereafter, a theory which is supported by a comment in the 1891 History of Androscoggin County in which it was stated that "Changes in population have now reduced its [the Church's] membership to about a score

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Atlas and History of Androscoggin County, Maine.
Philadelphia: Sanford, Everts and Company, 1873.

Merrill, Georgia Drew, ed. History of Androscoggin County. Boston: W.A. Ferguson & Company, 1891.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than 1

UTM References

A

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4	8	7	8	2	6	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property of less than one acre occupies the City of Auburn tax map 6, lot 8.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary embraces the entire lot including the non-contributing cemetery historically associated with the Free Baptist Church.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kirk F. Mohny, Architectural Historian

organization Maine Historic Preservation Commission date April, 1989

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a red, blue and a tan color scheme and stencils on their underside. The angled surface between wall and ceiling on the sides is also decorated with a foliate stenciled pattern, but one that is much more elaborate than that on the ceiling. These painted finishes are joined by an eight globe chandelier that retains its kerosene lamps and the effect created by the natural lighting filtered through the colored glass. A wood stove formerly stood at the northeast corner of the nave and the painted brick flue survives to mark its location. The balcony, which is an original feature, was equipped with hinged doors at the time of the remodeling that can close it from view.

The adjoining cemetery located to the north of the church building and bordered by a stone wall is considered a non-contributing site for the purposes of this nomination.

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and it is unable to maintain worship regularly." Nevertheless, some measure of activity must have continued since a large gold gilt bible was given to the Church in 1894. By the turn of the century all worship had ended until its brief period of use in the 1950s by the Church of God Brethren. Early in the next decade the non-profit group called Members of the Community of the Penleys Corner Church was organized to preserve the threatened building. In 1969 the church was opened for what was to become an annual service, the building having been completely restored and carefully maintained since.

The primary significance of this building derives from the integrity of the late nineteenth century remodeling within the confines of the original shell. From the exterior the only major change was made with the introduction of colored Queen Anne style upper sash in place of the original windows. Inside, the changes were much more substantial. The ceiling was lowered and the new wooden surfaces were carefully detailed with stencils and a tri-color paint scheme. A stenciled pattern was also painted on the wall surface framing the remodeled pulpit. In addition, wainscoting was installed along the walls and an ornate chandelier was affixed to the center of the new ceiling. Some of these elements survive in Maine churches and there is ample evidence to suggest that the use of stenciled finishes was prevalent in the late nineteenth century, but few of them have been identified with the range and integrity of features found here.

Architecturally, this church building is among the most modestly detailed of its period in the Auburn area. The use of the colonnade, however, is somewhat unusual and more like the engaged gable end porches found on existing commercial and residential buildings in parts of Oxford County to the west. Curiously, this arrangement was also utilized (with the addition of a tower and fluted Doric columns) in the design of the 1838 First Congregational Church in New Gloucester, the neighboring town to the south. No documentation has been uncovered to link the two buildings beyond this shared characteristic.